

NAVAL WAR COLLEGE  
Newport, R.I.

**TIME FOR A CONVERSION: WHY UNIFIED COMMANDERS ARE NOT WELL  
SERVED BY THEIR CHAPLAINS AND WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE**

by

Bradford E. Ableson  
CDR, CHC, USN

A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

4 May 2000

---

CAPT Pat Nash, USN  
Faculty Advisor, JMO Department

# REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

|   |                       |  |            |
|---|-----------------------|--|------------|
| <b>1. Report Security Classification:</b> UNCLASSIFIED  |                       |  |            |
| <b>2. Security Classification Authority:</b>  |                       |  |            |
| <b>3. Declassification/Downgrading Schedule:</b>  |                       |  |            |
| <b>4. Distribution/Availability of Report:</b> DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT A: APPROVED FOR PUBLIC RELEASE; DISTRIBUTION IS UNLIMITED.  |                       |  |            |
| <b>5. Name of Performing Organization:</b><br>JOINT MILITARY OPERATIONS DEPARTMENT  |                       |  |            |
| <b>6. Office Symbol:</b><br>C   |                       | <b>7. Address:</b> NAVAL WAR COLLEGE<br>686 CUSHING ROAD<br>NEWPORT, RI 02841-1207 |            |
| <b>8. Title (Include Security Classification):</b> <u>Time for a Conversion: Why Unified Commanders are not well Served by Their Chaplains and What Needs to Change</u> (U)   |                       |  |            |
| <b>9. Personal Authors:</b> CDR Bradford E. Ableson, CHC, USN   |                       |  |            |
| <b>10. Type of Report:</b> FINAL  |                       | <b>11. Date of Report:</b> 4 MAY 2002  |            |
| <b>12. Page Count:</b> 23 <b>12A Paper Advisor (if any):</b> CAPT Pat Nash, USN   |                       |  |            |
| <b>13. Supplementary Notation:</b> A paper submitted to the Faculty of the NWC in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the JMO Department. The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the NWC or the Department of the Navy.   |                       |  |            |
| <b>14. Ten key words that relate to your paper:</b><br>Unified Command Chaplain, Unified Combatant Commander, Religion, Unified Command, Religious Advisory, Joint Religious Ministry doctrine, Levels of War, Joint Task Force Chaplain, Chaplain Training, Religious Engagement.  |                       |  |            |
| <b>15. Abstract:</b><br>Religion is a crucial and contentious issue impacting operations in many theaters and Areas of Operation. Senior joint chaplain billets are justified on the basis of the chaplain's advisory capacity to the Unified Commander; and yet, poorly formulated joint doctrine virtually ensures joint commanders will have little authoritative guidance on what to expect from Unified Command Chaplains in terms of religious advisory support. The problem is exacerbated by the tendency of all Service chaplaincies to produce senior officers more attuned to meeting the religious free exercise/accommodation needs of U.S. personnel than to advising senior joint commanders on religious issues.<br>Changes in joint doctrine and a reformulation of training requirements for chaplains serving on Unified Command staffs will greatly enhance the quality of religious advisory support provided to U.S. Combatant Commanders. The resources to correct the problem and radically enhance the quality of support provided are at hand. The proposed changes will enable Unified Commanders to know what they should expect, and Unified Chaplains to know what they should provide. |                       |  |            |
| <b>16. Distribution / Availability of Abstract:</b>   | Unclassified<br><br>X | Same As Rpt  | DTIC Users |
| <b>17. Abstract Security Classification:</b> UNCLASSIFIED   |                       |  |            |
| <b>18. Name of Responsible Individual:</b> CHAIRMAN, JOINT MILITARY OPERATIONS DEPARTMENT   |                       |  |            |
| <b>19. Telephone:</b> 841-6461  |                       | <b>20. Office Symbol:</b> C  |            |

Security Classification of This Page Unclassified

## Abstract of

### **TIME FOR A CONVERSION: WHY UNIFIED COMMANDERS ARE NOT WELL SERVED BY THEIR CHAPLAINS AND WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE**

Religion is a crucial and contentious issue impacting operations in many theaters and Areas of Operation. Senior joint chaplain billets are justified on the basis of the chaplain's advisory capacity to the Unified Commander; and yet, poorly formulated joint doctrine virtually ensures joint commanders will have little authoritative guidance on what to expect from Unified Command Chaplains in terms of religious advisory support. The problem is exacerbated by the tendency of all Service chaplaincies to produce senior officers more attuned to meeting the religious free exercise/accommodation needs of U.S. personnel than to advising senior joint commanders on religious issues.

Changes in joint doctrine and a reformulation of training requirements for chaplains serving on Unified Command staffs will greatly enhance the quality of religious advisory support provided to U.S. Combatant Commanders. The resources to correct the problem and radically enhance the quality of support provided are at hand. The proposed changes will enable Unified Commanders to know what they should expect, and Unified Chaplains to know what they should provide.

## **Time for a Conversion: Why Unified Commanders are not well Served by Their Chaplains and What Needs to Change**

### ***Introduction***

The genius of the American system of government ensures freedom of religion for those desiring to exercise their faith and freedom *from* religion for those with no interest. In the U.S., military commanders bear responsibility to ensure Service Members are provided the opportunity for free exercise of religion as mandated by the First Amendment. Until relatively recently, however, U.S. commanders could ignore religious matters external to the force structure with relative impunity. This is no longer the case, for at the operational level of war the subject of religion transcends merely providing for the needs of U.S. personnel. Indeed, Unified Combatant Commanders are now faced with a pluralistic--often-volatile--world where religion is a significant force. Paul Wrigley writes:

Although religion's role in the theater of operations is often underestimated and hard to quantify, the wise commander will attempt to identify its impact in his theater. The operational commander, who is ignorant of or discounts the importance of religious belief, can incite his enemy, offend his allies, alienate his own forces, and arouse public opinion.<sup>1</sup>

The complexity of religion in military theaters and areas of responsibility (AORs) is underscored by conspicuous U.S. failures. It is widely acknowledged, for instance, that the 1979 revolution that toppled the Iranian government caught the U.S. unprepared largely because American elites could not imagine any country seriously embracing Islamic fundamentalism. The sobering recognition of Islam as an explosive force, however, did not prevent subsequent regrettable events as U.S. commanders dealt with Muslims. For example,

in April 1991 U.S. forces dropped Meals Ready to Eat (MREs) with pork to starving Kurdish Muslims.<sup>2</sup> The Kurds were embittered by what they viewed as a cruel dilemma created by the U.S.--starvation or violation of their religious dietary laws. Ironically, MREs without pork could have been dropped with a minimal amount of additional effort.<sup>3</sup> In Somalia, religion was more than a question of public relations when Bengali Muslim troops hesitated to provide supporting fires for U.S. forces because they did not know if a "*Fatwah*" (Muslim legal ruling) had been issued authorizing them to kill fellow Muslims.<sup>4</sup>

In light of increasing stakes, it is clear that *effective* commanders will take religion seriously while using the full range of tools available. For the Unified Commander, religious issues and implications will be worked in a variety of staff functions to include intelligence (J-2), information operations (IO), psychological operations (PSYOP), and the Unified Command Chaplain. The Unified Command Chaplain is specifically tasked to serve the Unified Commander as the principal advisor on matters of religion.<sup>5</sup>

Unfortunately, flaws in the U.S. system undercut the support provided to Unified Commanders by chaplains on matters of religion. Senior joint chaplain billets are justified on the basis of the chaplain's advisory capacity to the Unified Commander; and yet, poorly formulated joint doctrine virtually ensures joint commanders will have little authoritative guidance on what to expect from Unified Command Chaplains in terms of religious advisory support. The problem is exacerbated by the tendency of all Service chaplaincies to produce senior officers more attuned to meeting the religious free exercise/accommodation needs of U.S. personnel than to advising senior joint commanders on religious issues. The time for change is now, with three major areas in need of speedy and dramatic improvement: Doctrine

and Policy, Expectation Baselines for Unified Command Chaplains, and Personnel Management and Training.

### ***Doctrine and Policy***

Unified Chaplains are not prepared to adequately advise Unified Commanders on religious issues because of systemic inadequacies created by poor doctrine. Joint Pub 1-05, *Religious Ministry Support for Joint Operations* is woefully inadequate. Specifically it:

- Fails to deal with religion beyond accommodation issues for U.S. personnel;
- Lacks a meaningful framework for religious analysis in an AOR (See Appendix for an excellent model used by U.S. Army chaplains at the tactical level);
- Makes *no meaningful distinction* in the responsibilities of chaplains with regard to the levels of war. (Thus, the same duties are assumed for Unified Command Chaplains and battalion-level chaplains.); and
- Does not define the relationships between Unified Command, Joint Task Force (JTF), and supporting Service element chaplaincies.

Indeed, the text quickly reveals the pub was not written for Unified Commanders--it is instead a handbook for chaplains. Therefore, Unified Commanders are given no benchmarks to guide their expectations of Unified Command Chaplains at the operational level.<sup>6</sup> This lack of clarity is not confined to Joint Pub 1-05. When religion is mentioned in other joint pubs, the role of the chaplain is frequently not expressed. Joint Pubs 3-07 (Military Operations Other Than War), 3-07.3 (Peace Keeping Ops), and 3-57 (Civil Affairs) stand as examples of publications in which religion is noted but the role of the chaplain is not articulated.

The observation that "nature hates a vacuum" pertains in regard to Unified Command Chaplains. Because there is no codified guidance in U.S. doctrine, each chaplain is free to create the job in his or her own image. This would be problematic with chaplains of similar abilities and skills, but it is exacerbated by the wide variety of chaplains. This assertion

receives the strong concurrence of the Staff Chaplain for the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS). In his capacity as CJCS Chaplain, he interfaces with all Unified Command Chaplains and the Nation's most senior military commanders. He observes:

I've talked with numerous line officers who have commanded troops in the last four to five years, from all branches of Service. There is a common thread among their debriefs: Chaplains are unpredictable. They are all different with a wide range of capabilities. You never know what you're going to get. [Line commanders] tell me they hold their breath as the new chaplain reports aboard. This is also indicative of the moral/morale impact a chaplain can have on a command, which is for better or worse. This helps explain why [commanders] will often insert themselves into the assignment process with firm, by-name requests. Because they perceive the quality base so uneven and unpredictable, they're not sure what they're going to get.<sup>7</sup>

Thus, given the conspicuous lack of guidance provided by U.S. doctrine and policy it is little wonder the quality of chaplaincy provided to Unified Commanders varies dramatically. If a Unified Command Chaplain is exceedingly professional and driven to excellence, he or she will stand tall and provide outstanding service. Conversely, a chaplain lacking such qualities may define the job in minimalist terms and have virtually no impact in the AOR. The CJCS chaplain has observed that currently, Unified Command Chaplains span the quality continuum from optimal performers to under-achieving "House Pastors" whose efforts are confined to the Headquarters building, providing services that could be delivered by a junior officer.<sup>8</sup> At the end of the day, Unified Command Chaplains who translate doctrinal latitude into underachievement create a void in the area of religious advisory support which non-chaplain colleagues must fill.

An important first step is to create a consistent set of standards to enable Unified Commanders to know what they may expect (and as a result demand) from their Command Chaplains. This in turn will also serve as a benchmark enabling chaplains to know what they must produce. The most effective way to start the professionalization process is to formalize

the precepts of joint ministry and policy by directing a complete revision of Joint Pub 1-05, *Religious Ministry Support for Joint Operations*. At a minimum, the revised pub should:

- Articulate and link expectations of chaplains to the level of war for which their reporting seniors are responsible;
- Require Unified Command Chaplains to function beyond the mere provision and facilitation role in order to become a strategic/operational asset to the Unified Commander;
- Define relationships between chaplains in the Joint Force (JF) hierarchy;
- Create a meaningful framework for religious analysis in the AOR;<sup>9</sup> and
- Include and codify mandatory functions and tasks to ensure Unified Commanders are optimally served.

This task is complicated by the fact that much of the doctrine will have to be created *ex nihilo*. Defining the actual performance standards of Unified Command Chaplains may, in reality, be one of the easiest aspects of the Joint Pub 1-05 revision. A number of competent Unified Command Chaplains (incumbents and former billet holders) are available to create a working document of best practices. Under the aegis of the CJCS Chaplain, prototype position descriptions could be quickly created and vetted through U.S. Joint Forces Command (JFCOM) in order to assist the action officers tasked to rewrite the pub.

Delineation of chaplain duties at the levels of war will be more difficult. U.S. military chaplains have a long and distinguished history of functioning at the tactical level of war and, in truth, most of the Service chaplaincies train primarily to this level. In most AORs religious ministry for U.S. personnel is provided by chaplains organic to the Service-specific forces chopped to the Unified Commander. It is at the level between the Unified Commander and the tactical commander that a conspicuous void exists. No Unified Command Chaplain can hope to convey the commander's intent on a plethora of religious and chaplain-related issues without effective intermediaries throughout the AOR. This reality makes JTF Chaplains key assets. Unfortunately, the role of the JTF Chaplain is a



matter of wide speculation. Unlike tactical-level chaplain billets that are mastered in the progress of a career, JTF Chaplain positions are frequently filled by arbitrarily selected (and inadequately prepared) chaplains. Once tapped, the neophyte JTF Chaplain will find no rulebook for review, scarce training to be had, and very few post-JTF Chaplains to consult.<sup>10</sup> Though some learn on the job and become outstanding performers, their success is more a feature of personal talent than of a system designed to produce excellence.

The U.S. European Command (EUCOM) Chaplain, for instance, notes that deficits in doctrine and training make JTF Chaplains the weak link in his AOR.<sup>11</sup> Formulation of standards for JTF Chaplains--many of whom will be truly functioning in a joint capacity for the first time--is a critical area that should be tasked to JFCOM as soon as possible. In addition to formulating required functions and tasks, there is a pressing need for JFCOM to create and facilitate a training continuum for JTF Chaplains. The most logical place for such training to be administered is at JFCOM's Joint War Fighting Center (JWFC), in Suffolk, Virginia where the integrated staffs of JTFs are prepared prior to deployment. If the training is designed as a stand-alone component, individual chaplains could be trained to form candidacy pools from which qualified JTF Chaplains could be drawn. The availability of such training would also enable prospective JTF Chaplains to train en route to assuming duties. Optimally, however, JTF Chaplains should train at JWFC with the JTF they would be serving.

The codification of expectations for Unified Command Chaplains, as well as the formulation of standards and training of JTF Chaplains, would greatly enhance the Unified Commander's ability to coordinate religious ministry teams in light of theater-strategic interests. The resulting enhancements in professionalism would enable the symbiotic

interplay between trained chaplains assigned to commanders at the various levels of war. In such a context, this relationship between chaplains in the AOR would be similar to IO cells at the Combatant Command and JTF levels, which are expected to work in harness. Presently, a dearth of doctrine and training virtually ensures degraded performance by chaplains across the AOR.

### ***Expectation Baselines for Unified Command Chaplains***

As a baseline expectation, Unified Commanders should be able to look to the Unified Command Chaplain for a mastery of the religious issues in the AOR. Such a skill set must transcend the mere provision and facilitation of worship for U.S. personnel. At a minimum, this would also entail:

- The ability to analyze conflicts for religious content;
- The ability to advise the commanders on mitigation of religiously-charged scenarios;
- Comprehensive knowledge of religion in the AOR before, if possible, the commencement of hostilities; and
- The coordination and execution of religious engagement efforts.

The first of these baseline expectations is the ability to analyze regional conflicts for religious content. Unified Command Chaplains must be able to diagnostically assess which conflicts are patently religious, which conflicts are *not* religious, and which conflicts--though not primarily religious--have the potential to flash into a so-called "Holy War." In actuality, a close examination reveals that not as many conflicts are patently religious as one may think.

"More people have died in the name of God than for anything else," is a commonly heard phrase. Yet, instead of confirming the frequency of religious warfare, the statement reflects the human penchant to eulogize war dead in ultimate terms. The twentieth century

was the bloodiest century in human history, and most victims did not die in religious conflicts. Yet, theological language became the coin of the bereaved in both large and small conflicts.<sup>12</sup> This tendency is mirrored by the leaders of nations in virtually every war. Thus, it is important to understand that despite the use of religious rhetoric, most conflicts are non-sectarian affairs.

In terms of religion, there are essentially three types of war. The first has a primarily religious component. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict serves as a stark example. And though the conflict involves contested land, one must note religion as a substantial point of conflict. For instance, the Palestinian people were homeless before the 1948 establishment of the State of Israel. The explosion of violence in the region since then, and the extent to which passions for respective combatants run along religious lines (even outside the region), indicates a substantial religious component to the conflict. Such so-called holy wars are exceedingly difficult to manage and when hostilities affect U.S. interests, the response will require the application of all elements of National power.

A second type of war is not religious in the least, despite the use of religious grammar. Northern Ireland, for instance, is a conflict rich in theological language but devoid of theological issues.<sup>13</sup> It would be a major mistake for any nation to view conflicts such as these as holy wars. Indeed, conflicts are seldom religious when the contested issue is primarily a matter of which ethnic groups will govern their neighbors. Unified Commanders should approach such cases as non-sectarian clashes of conflicting interests, with religious monikers masking a conspicuous lack of religious issues. Failure to understand this dynamic is analogous to watching a pro football game between Dallas and Washington and thinking real *cowboys* are battling real *Indians*.

The third type of conflict is not primarily religious, but has a religious component with the potential to mobilize nationalist and ethnic passions. Examples of such conflicts include Afghanistan, Kosovo, Indonesia, Nigeria, Chechnya, Kashmir, Sudan, and Sri Lanka.<sup>14</sup> Frequently, such conflicts will include contested holy sites and places of religious significance to the combatants within the AOR/theater. This context provides perhaps the most crucial setting for an effective Unified Command Chaplain advising the Combatant Commander on religious matters, because mishandling a religious issue--in such a context--could create a religious flash fire changing the dynamic of the conflict.

This leads to the second baseline of expectation for Unified Command Chaplains: The ability to advise the commanders on mitigation of religiously-charged scenarios. In the days following September 11, President Bush's use of the term "Crusade," to describe military operations against terrorists in the Greater Middle East, was an extremely unfortunate example to be avoided. In fact, there is no more value-laden term to mobilize religiously derived anti-Western sentiment in the pan-Arabic world.

Such gaffes make it exceedingly difficult for Arab moderates to stand with any U.S.-led coalition. Any U.S. Combatant Commander evidencing a similar deficit of knowledge and judgment on religious matters would provide a windfall for the Nation's enemies. Thus, it is a virtual certainty that adversaries in this type of war will attempt to exploit any ignorance discovered in the Unified Commander relative to religion in the AOR.<sup>15</sup> It should be the responsibility of his Command Chaplain to ensure the Unified Commander and his staff are well aware of the religious trip wire issues.

Here, the Unified Command Chaplain will fulfill a crucial function if he or she helps the Combatant Commander lower the religious quotient in the conflict. Obviously, advising

on the use of religiously appropriate language, and the avoidance of inflammatory actions, is an essential task. Providing deeper insight into the complex religious dynamics of the region should also be an expectation of the Unified Commander's Command Chaplain. For instance, following acts of terrorism, it is important for a Unified Command Chaplain to be able to discern the level of solidarity within the AOR between the religious citizenry and the terrorists. In the current Global War on Terrorism (GWOT), commanders will invariably face AORs with large demographic blocks of natives expressing, often in religious terms, verbal support of terrorists. The Combatant Commander's staff will attempt to analyze the threat posed to Allied Forces by sympathetic locals. The Unified Command Chaplain should provide an informed view of the dynamic between religion and "religious terrorism" in order to provide the Commander a more nuanced assessment.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, all Unified Command Chaplains must be able to assess such dynamics and bring their findings to the interdisciplinary table in order to fulfill the religious advisory mandate.

Another crucial way Unified Command Chaplains must work to lower religious volatility is to provide analysis of the religious polity of combatants and implications in the theater of operations. An example of this at the national-strategic level occurred at the JCS in the opening days of the GWOT. The terrorists' holy war verbiage inspired some in the Pentagon to establish U.S. "just war" footing by exploiting the extent to which Muslims in the West were repelled by the attacks. Specifically, there was a desire to solicit *Fatwahs* supporting U.S. military efforts. The CJCS Chaplain argued against the solicitation of *Fatwahs* endorsing military action on the basis that such efforts would be futile at best and explosive at worst. Since Islam has no central judicatory, the Chaplain knew that any U.S.-issued *Fatwah* would be matched (and discredited) by dozens from radical elements in the

AOR. But more negatively, the U.S. would theologize the war along divisive lines to the great detriment of coalition efforts. Though such reasoning appears sound now, the CJCS Chaplain's opinion initially was viewed as non-cooperative by some who saw pro-U.S. *Fatwahs* as an IO stroke of brilliance.<sup>17</sup>

The third baseline for Unified Command Chaplains must be a comprehensive knowledge of religion in the AOR before, if possible, the commencement of hostilities. Unified Commanders are responsible for vast amounts of territory, frequently marked by religiously diverse populations. In a religiously pluralistic Unified Command (such as EUCOM with ninety-three nations), it is virtually impossible for any one officer to master the religious dynamics of the AOR without a connectional relationship to key resources. Vital resources for monitoring religious issues by geographic region are found in the U.S. embassies established throughout the AOR. Embassy personnel possess knowledge of the religious history, folklore, and issues of contention. They are also keenly aware of local tensions between religious groups.

Unified Command Chaplains would do well to monitor the religious pulse of the AOR through a relationship--directed and formalized by Combatant Commanders--with selected embassies. Selection of the embassies should be made in light of theater-strategic considerations and the Unified Command Chaplain should be required to meet or speak with a designated point of contact (POC) regularly.<sup>18</sup> Respective Defense Attaches would be acceptable POCs, but a better choice would be the Chief Political Counselor for he or she is tasked to interpret the host nation to the U.S.<sup>19</sup> Though a formalized relationship with every embassy would not be an advisable use of time and resources, it is quite reasonable to expect Unified Command Chaplains to monitor the annual human rights reports required of each

embassy. Information derived from embassy contacts and resources of this nature would greatly enhance the depth of formal religious advice provided to Unified Commanders by their chaplains on the religious issues of allies as well as potential enemies.

Lastly, Unified Command Chaplains must strive to anticipate the religious questions that will arise in time of war. Given the religious distinctives of the AOR, the Unified Command Chaplain should be prepared to answer questions about the religious implications of subjects ranging from mortuary practices to bombing on holy days. Here it must be noted that each AOR will require separate analysis. For instance, in the GWOT, many questioned whether the U.S. should continue military operations during the Muslim observance of Ramadan. Douglas Johnston helpfully observes that in such cases, military leaders should consider what Muslims themselves have done during Ramadan. History reveals a long history of military operations by Muslim combatants during Ramadan. For instance, Islam's most revered figure, Mohammed, actually captured Mecca during Ramadan in AD 634. The 1973 war initiated by Egypt and Syria against Israel occurred during Ramadan, and the Iran-Iraq War in the 1980s was fought through Ramadan each year.<sup>20</sup>

A more problematic question arose during recent NATO operations against Serbia. After considerable debate, the decision was made on the basis of military necessity to bomb Serbia on Orthodox Easter. The military utility of the decision to bomb Serbia on their holy day is one that will be judged by history. Unfortunately, the Serbs were able to note that the only other military to have bombed them on Easter was the Nazis during the Second World War<sup>21</sup> Such ironies should not preclude military operations, but the Unified Command Chaplain should be able to ensure the Unified Commander is aware of the history of combat and religion in the AOR.

The fourth baseline of effectiveness that should be normative for Unified Command Chaplains is the coordination and execution of religious engagement efforts. All Unified Commanders are concerned with engagement in the AOR. On matters of religion, engagement results in enhanced goodwill with allies and neutrals as well as better informed Unified Command Chaplains to advise their Combatant Commanders. Interestingly, however, a review of Theater Engagement Plans for all U.S. Unified Commands reveals a conspicuously low number of religious engagement activities.

At a minimum, Unified Commands should pursue a robust program of religious engagement efforts with the Unified Command Chaplain made responsible for creating initiatives, staffing responses, and coordinating religious ministry assets in the AOR in order to further the Unified Commander's objectives. In addition to codifying such developments in doctrine, the Unified Command Chaplain should be fully integrated into the Theater Engagement Planning Management Information System (TEPMIS) that tracks the ways in which the Unified Commander's J-Codes and Special staff engage nations in the AOR. Chaplain efforts such as military-to-military contacts with chaplaincies, international chaplain conferences, and coordination of humanitarian assistance projects are but a few of the initiatives that should exist in every AOR. A creative use of religion for engagement can strengthen ties with allies and facilitate the thaw with former adversaries. The EUCOM Command Chaplain, for instance, has recently initiated a conference of chaplains from the former Soviet bloc to include Russia, Ukraine, Georgia, Rumania, Bulgaria, Armenia, and Estonia.<sup>22</sup>

Having addressed what Unified Command Chaplains should be expected and required to do, it is appropriate to address what they should not be allowed to do. First, it is



imperative to ensure chaplains maintain their traditional status as noncombatants. Therefore, chaplains should not be assigned duties planning IO and PSYOP actions. PSYOP and IO are tools of war; while insights provided by chaplains on the nature and religion of a people may have great utility for warfare, the transformation of information into acts of war should not be done by chaplains. In a similar way, chaplains may have information pertinent to staff intelligence concerns (e.g., Muslim allies may be hesitant to kill Muslim enemies without a *Fatwah*). Yet, the chaplain must never become (or appear to be) an intelligence operative. A chaplain's analysis of AOR religion may be used by anyone on the Unified Commander's staff to better perform his or her job--care should be taken, however, to ensure the chaplain is not performing the warfighter's job.

A second important distinction is to discern the difference between when a chaplain's duty is an honorable manifestation of religious ministry (that happens to have IO utility) and when the chaplain would be asked to undertake missions not rooted in the valid exercise of religious ministry support. The former scenario is acceptable while the latter is not. For instance, when U.S. Forces moved captured Taliban fighters to Camp X-ray at the U.S. Naval Base in Cuba, a Muslim U.S. Navy chaplain was ordered to the camp. The chaplain conducted normal duties as a Muslim cleric including daily prayers over the camp speaker system and the story received widespread press coverage. No doubt the entire evolution was an IO (and public relations) coup. Yet, this is acceptable because the chaplain was merely asked to perform standard religious duties in a U.S. military camp. Were the chaplain to be asked to counsel prisoners and report to camp officials, however, it would be illegal, unethical and highly detrimental in the long run. Unified Command Chaplains must be exceedingly vigilant to protect the integrity of chaplain employment throughout the AOR.

### ***Personnel Management and Training***

In order to correct the underachievement of chaplains in U.S. Unified Commands, a final area is in need of immediate and dramatic improvement: Personnel Management and Training. As stated above, joint doctrine fails to articulate meaningful distinctions in the duties of chaplains across the spectrum of responsibility in AORs. Formulation of responsibilities of chaplains assigned at each level of the joint forces should be a first step. Unified Command Chaplains must be expected to function effectively at the theater-strategic/operational-strategic levels of war. JTF Chaplains must function at the operational-tactical level. Unit chaplains will be expected to function at the tactical level. (N.B., Chaplains at this level will rightly be focused on their troops, but great benefit can be derived from AOR information and guidance provided from the Unified Commander and JTF Chaplains.) These definitions of responsibilities should then be listed in the Joint Mission Essential Task List (JMETL) to enable mission-to-task formulations and corresponding training to be developed and required.

Additionally, the manning of Unified Command Chaplain billets merits reconsideration. Joint chaplains billets are designated either as rotational or Service-specific fills. Focusing on selected Combatant Commander and staff positions, billets rotating among the Service chaplaincies on a three-year cycle include Office of the Secretary of Defense,<sup>23</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff, U.S. Central Command, U.S. European Command, U.S. Special Operations Command, U.S. Southern Command, and (soon) U.S. Northern Command. The Navy always fills Command Chaplain billets at JFCOM and U.S. Pacific Command (PACOM).<sup>24</sup> This structure is particularly problematic to JFCOM and PACOM with regard to Unified Command Chaplains, for these two commands are simultaneously the Fleet

Chaplain for the U.S. Atlantic and Pacific Fleets. The task of fulfilling the charter of a Unified Command Chaplain cannot be accomplished on a part-time basis no matter how talented the assigned chaplain might be. If Unified Commander's desire optimal service from their Command Chaplains, they cannot afford part-time help.

The systemic flaws undercutting the effectiveness of religious support provided to Unified Commanders are compounded by the lack of training requirements for Unified Command Chaplains. The unfortunate fact is, other than seniority, there are no required qualifications for Unified Command Chaplain nominees. A requirement that prospective Unified Command Chaplains must have completed Joint Professional Military Education (JPME) Phase I would be a significant step forward. Quite simply, any Command Chaplain reporting to a Unified Commander without a solid grounding in JPME is unprepared to fathom the full implications of the job. Additionally, chaplains lacking JPME Phase II should be required to complete the training at the Joint Forces Staff College en route to the Unified Command. Ideally, the collective flag officers of the Service branches would adopt these standards (when convened as the Armed Forces Chaplains Board). In the absence of such a decision, qualifications for Unified Command Chaplains should be set at the CJCS level.<sup>25</sup>

Finally, due to the pressing need to understand the cultural and religious nuances of the AOR, prospective Unified Command Chaplains should attend the U.S. State Department's Foreign Service Institute (FSI) in Rosslyn, VA. FSI provides short courses in customs, culture, and politics for all corners of the globe.<sup>26</sup> Attendance at one of these two-week-long seminars en route to the Unified Command would ensure a more thoroughly prepared Command Chaplain and a better-served Combatant Commander.

## ***Conclusion***

Despite the complexity and potential impact of religion in military operations, the primary warfighters in the U.S. military do not enjoy adequate support from the chaplains assigned as their primary advisors on matters of religion. Deeply flawed joint doctrine provides Unified Commander's with inadequate guidance on what to expect from the Unified Command Chaplains. To make matters worse, the only qualifications presently required to serve as a Unified Command Chaplain are seniority and the nomination of one's Chief of Chaplains. And yet, the resources to correct the problem and radically enhance the quality of support provided are at hand. Changes in joint doctrine and a reformulation of training requirements for chaplains serving on Unified Command staffs will greatly enhance the quality of religious advisory support provided to U.S. Combatant Commanders. The proposed changes will enable Unified Commanders to know what they should expect, and Unified Chaplains to know what they should provide.

## APPENDIX

### Guide to Analysis of Local Religions

(Annex E of US Army Field Manual 16-1, "Religious Support," 26 May 1995)

| AREAS OF CONCERN  | SPECIFIC INFORMATION   |
|---|--|
| Religions in the area   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Organized.</li> <li>- Unorganized.</li> <li>- Relations between religions and religious leaders, both indigenous and missionary.</li> </ul>   |
| Clergy  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Number, locations, and education of clergy.</li> <li>- Influence on government and populace.</li> </ul>   |
| Religious beliefs   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Major tenets of each religion, to include such concepts as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Faith.</li> <li>* Impact of faith on life.</li> <li>* Concepts of salvation and the hereafter.</li> <li>* Rites of cleaning and purification.</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Degree of religious conviction in lives of indigenous populace.</li> </ul>                      |
| Worship   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Forms of worship.</li> <li>- Places of worship.</li> <li>- Frequency of worship.</li> <li>- Significance of worship.</li> </ul>   |
| Relationship between religion and motivation of indigenous people | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Strength of religious sentiment.</li> <li>- Influence of religion on daily life.</li> </ul>   |
| Relationship between religion and trans-cultural communication    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Attitudes toward people of other races and cultures.</li> <li>- Acceptable kinds of social interaction.</li> </ul>  |
| Socio-economic influence of religion                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Influence of religious leaders.</li> <li>- Influence of religion on society.</li> <li>- Economic influence of religion. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Religious ownership of property and other possessions.</li> <li>* Teachings of religion about private property.</li> <li>* Relationship of religious leaders to economic leaders.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |

| AREAS OF CONCERN          | SPECIFIC INFORMATION   |
|---------------------------|--|
| Relations with government | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Relationship of religious leaders to government officials.</li> <li>- Role of religion and religious leaders in armed forces.</li> <li>- Political influence of religious leaders.</li> </ul> |
| Religious schools         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Location, size, and attendance.</li> <li>- Influence.</li> <li>- Relationship to non-religious schools.</li> </ul>  |

## NOTES

---

<sup>1</sup> Paul R. Wrigley, "The Impact of Religious Belief in the Theater of Operations," (Unpublished Research Paper, U.S. Naval War College, Newport, RI, 1995), p. ii.

<sup>2</sup> CAPT E. F. Blancett, CHC, USN, telephone interview 25 January 1995, cited by Wrigley, *Op. Cit.*, p. 6.

<sup>3</sup> Kosher MREs are now available; yet, from inception, manufacturers offered a variety of non-pork entrees as well as vegetarian options. While serving Fleet Marine Force units, the author noted that each time MRE crates were opened and meals were distributed to Service members, those with special dietary requirements (e.g., Jews, Muslims, and Seventh Day Adventists) made a point to get or trade for certain "acceptable" entrees. In 1991 operations supporting Kurds, U.S. logisticians had the option of seeking entrée-specific MRE pallets from the manufacturer or--in the worst case scenario--building acceptable pallets in theater from randomly sorted crates.

<sup>4</sup> Timothy J. Demy, "The Impact of Religious Belief in Military Operations Other Than War," (Unpublished Research Paper, U.S. Naval War College, Newport, RI, 1998), p. 10.

<sup>5</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Religious Ministry Support for Joint Operations*, Joint Pub 1-05 (Washington, DC: 26 August 1996), II-2: "The Command Chaplain of the Combatant Command . . . Serves as the principal adviser to the combatant commander on matters of religion, ethics, and morals."

<sup>6</sup> The term operational in this context refers to the operational level of war. Frequently, chaplains use the term "operational" vis-à-vis "shore" or garrison duty. In terms of joint doctrine, however, most so-called "operational" chaplains are not operational--they are tactical.

<sup>7</sup> CAPT M. R. Ferguson, CHC, USN, Staff Chaplain, CJCS, written response to the author's inquiry, 13 April 2002.

<sup>8</sup> CAPT M. R. Ferguson, CHC, USN, telephone interview 24 March 2002.

<sup>9</sup> U.S. Army Field Manual 16-1 Annex E, "Religious Support," 26 May 1995 provides an superb starting point.

<sup>10</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Task Force Planning Guidance and Procedures*, Joint Pub 5-00.2, (Washington, DC: 13 January 1999) II-16, 17 identifies selected expectations of JTF Chaplains with an inward-looking focus clearly derivative from Joint Pub 1-05. No specific mention is made of religion as an engagement issue with host nations and allies. Additionally, "providing assessment to the CJTF and staff on cultural and religious influences on mission accomplishment" is listed as the last of nine JTF Chaplain functions.

<sup>11</sup> CH, Col., John Stefaro, USAF, Command Chaplain, U.S. European Command, telephone interview 18 April 2002

<sup>12</sup> Of course, the grammar of faith may accurately convey the convictions of the bereaved in devout families, but frequently theological language is adopted by bereaved secularists. Attribution of combat deaths to ultimate purposes is not uncommon even in wars when survivors are not invested in the Nation's strategic goals.

<sup>13</sup> Though Northern Ireland is an archetypal example of such conflicts, Beirut, Lebanon in early 1980s was an example of pluralistic religious monikers identifying numerous combatants.

<sup>14</sup> Douglas M. Johnston, "We Neglect Religion at Our Peril" *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings* (January 2002): p. 51.

---

<sup>15</sup> The words of a Unified Commander are critically important. In particular, comments suggesting a lack of appreciation for the values of a host nation can complicate U.S. foreign policy throughout the region. When a 12-year-old Okinawan school girl was kidnapped and raped by three U.S. Servicemen in November 1995, the Commander in Chief, U.S. Pacific Command, ADM R. C. Macke, said: "I think it was absolutely stupid. I've said several times, that for the price they paid to rent the car, they could have had a girl." (See "Commander in Chief, US Pacific Command, to Retire Early," Navy Public Affairs Library, Naval Media Center Publishing, Release No. 1995NWSA1277, 20 November 1995.) ADM Macke's comments appalled U.S. allies throughout the region and enabled adversaries in the AOR to argue against U.S. presence due to American values. Questions of religion touch similar deeply held beliefs, and it is imperative that Unified Combatant Commanders speak judiciously on the subject.

<sup>16</sup> Pauletta Otis, "The Role of Intelligence in Fighting Terrorism," *Defense Intelligence Journal*, Vol.11, No. 1, (Winter 2002): p. 32 provides an extremely helpful framework for analysis of religious terrorism that should inform religious advisory efforts. Specifically, there is a lack of religious solidarity between religious adherents and terrorists. Terrorists are particularly inclined to claim theological motives in order to mobilize the sentiment of faith adherents and cloak terrorist acts in religious legitimacy. Observers can be confused by the interplay between terrorists and the believers of the faith groups the terrorists purportedly represent. Research shows, that adherents and fundamentalists will frequently *verbally* support terrorists, but tend to distance themselves from acts of terror. Conversely, radicals and terrorists embrace violence while *verbally* supporting the faith--and yet if forced to choose, radicals and terrorists will leave the community of faith before relinquishing the tools of terror.

<sup>17</sup> CAPT M. R. Ferguson, CHC, USN, Staff Chaplain, CJCS, 24 March 2002.

<sup>18</sup> The selection of embassies and frequency of contact will be driven by the specifics of each AOR. Monitoring locations marked by religious contention will obviously provide Unified Commanders with more helpful information than feedback from religiously monolithic areas. The frequency of contact between Unified Command Chaplains and embassy POCs should be determined by religious demographics as well as the potential for change in contentious regions. Care should be given to ensure a predetermined number of contacts are not used as measures of effectiveness (MOE). Substantial feedback, not mere periodicity of contacts, should be the only acceptable MOE.

<sup>19</sup> Mr. Robert Patterson, U.S. State Department, interview, Newport, RI, 18 April 2002.

<sup>20</sup> Johnston, *Op. Cit.*, p. 51.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> CH, Col., John Stefaro, USAF, written response to the author's inquiry, 25 April 2002.

<sup>23</sup> The chaplain assigned to OSD serves as the Executive Director of the Armed Forces Chaplains Board (AFCB). AFCB is comprised by the two chaplain flag officers from the Army, Air Force and Navy (the USN Deputy Chief of Chaplains is also the Chaplain of the Marine Corps). The Board meets quarterly to consider issues and policies affecting religion across Service lines.

<sup>24</sup> Joint Religious Ministry Manpower Requirements document dated 26 March 2002, provided by CAPT(Sel) Phillip E. Gwaltney, CHC, USN, Director: Manpower, Community Management, and Reserve Affairs, Office of the Chief of Chaplains (N971), 8 April 2002.

<sup>25</sup> The requirement of JPME for joint billets has traditionally been more problematic for chaplains than other officer communities. The exclusion of chaplains from Goldwater-Nichols legislation, resulted in limited training seats for chaplains in JPME pipelines. Thus, JPME Phase I qualification by chaplains is frequently a function of self-selection through non-residential courses. The concern has been that a Phase I requirement would prevent the best officers from being detailed to joint billets. This logic is deeply flawed for prospective Unified Command Chaplains can be sent to residential JPME programs en route. Were the respective Chaplain Corps to implement a

---

career-enhancing Unified Command Chaplain Screening Board at the commander/lieutenant colonel level--requiring either residential or nonresidential JPME--the candidacy pool would become very deep in short order.

<sup>26</sup> "Liaison Officers/Cultural Advisors." JULLS no. 51765-23200. UNCLASSIFIED. *Joint Universal Lessons Learned System*, 24 April 94. UNCLAS. Current information can be accessed at "Foreign Service Institute" homepage <<http://www.state.gov/m/fsi/>> [28 April 2002].



---

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Demy, Timothy J. "The Impact of Religious Belief in Military Operations Other Than War," Unpublished Research Paper, U.S. Naval War College, Newport, RI: 1998.
- Ferguson, M. R. <[melvin.ferguson@js.pentagon.mil](mailto:melvin.ferguson@js.pentagon.mil)> "Re: Unified Command Chaplain Questions" [E-mail to Bradford E. Ableson <[ablesonchc@aol.com](mailto:ablesonchc@aol.com)>] 13 April 2002.
- Johnston, Douglas M. "We Neglect Religion at Our Peril" *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings* (January 2002): 50-52.
- "Liaison Officers/Cultural Advisors." JULLS no. 51765-23200. UNCLASSIFIED. *Joint Universal Lessons Learned System*. Washington, DC: 24 April 94.
- Otis, Pauletta. "The Role of Intelligence in Fighting Terrorism," *Defense Intelligence Journal*, Vol.11, No. 1, (Winter 2002): 27-37.
- Stefaro, John. <[steferoj@eucom.mil](mailto:steferoj@eucom.mil)> "Re: PHONCON Follow Up." [E-mail to Bradford E. Ableson <[ablesonchc@aol.com](mailto:ablesonchc@aol.com)>] 25 April 2002.
- U.S. Army. *Religious Support*, Field Manual 16-1, 26 May 1995.
- U.S. Department of Defense. *Armed Forces Chaplains Board Charter*, DOD Directive 5120.8, Washington, DC: 20 March 1995.
- U.S. Department of Defense. *Functions of the Department of Defense and Its Major Components*, DOD Directive 5100.1, Washington, DC: 25 September 1987.
- U.S. Department of Defense. *Accommodation of Religious Practices within the Military*, DOD Directive 1300.17, Washington, DC: 3 February 1988.
- U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff. *Joint Doctrine for Military Operations Other than War*, Joint Pub 3-07, Washington, DC: 16 June 1995.
- U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff. *Religious Ministry Support for Joint Operations*, Joint Pub 1-05, Washington, DC: 26 August 1996.
- U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff. *Joint Task Force Planning Guidance and Procedures*, Joint Pub 5-00.2, Washington, DC: 13 January 1999.
- U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff. *Joint Tactics, Techniques and Procedures for Peace Operations*, Joint Pub 3-07.3, Washington, DC: 12 February 1999.
- U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff. *Joint Warfare of the Armed Forces of the United States*, Joint Pub 1, Washington, DC: 14 Nov 2000.

---

U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff. *Joint Doctrine for Civil-Military Operations*, Washington, DC: Joint Pub 3-57, 08 February 2001.

U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff. *Unified Action Armed Forces (UNAAF)*, Washington, DC: Joint Pub 0-2, 10 July 2001.

U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff. *Doctrine for Joint Operations*, Washington, DC: Joint Pub 3-0, 10 September 2001.

Wrigley, Paul. "The Impact of Religious Belief in the Theater of Operations." Unpublished Research Paper, U.S. Naval War College, Newport, RI: 1995.